

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

Soviet. Several Russians acted as advisers or as outright executives, among them Jacob Blumkin, famous for his assassination of the German Ambassador in Moscow,¹² and Commissar Abrahamov, who installed himself at Resht, ousted the Iranian governor of the city, and issued inflammatory proclamations to the population.

The new regime started a reign of terror that was directed primarily against big landowners. Their estates were confiscated and distributed among the peasants. At the same time, the work of the political organization of the masses was undertaken, a soviet of peasants being the form of local government promoted throughout the area. In this undertaking, however, the new rulers of Gilan met with disappointment: while ready to grab the land which was offered, the Iranian peasantry was apathetic to any new experimentation.¹³

The revolutionary government extended its influence to the province of Mazanderan as well. As time went on, the pro-Soviet elements asserted themselves openly in the midst of Kuchik's movement. **On** one occasion Ekhsanulla Khan addressed a "spontaneous" appeal to Narimanov, Chairman of the Council of Commissars of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku. The telegram is illustrative of the prevailing trends: "The laboring masses of Mazanderan appeal to the Soviet Republics. The population of Mazanderan awaits the help of the Third International. . . . Long Live the World's Revolution. Long Live the Third International." ¹⁴

The Gilan Soviet was in control of the Caspian provinces for about a year and a half, from the spring of 1920 till the fall of 1921. In its later stages internal dissensions broke out

within its ranks, owing to differences between Kuchik Khan, who was always something of a moderate, and the outright Communists. This schism led eventually

12 Barmine, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

is Iransky in his "Russko-Persitskiye Otnoshenia za Piat Let" (*Novy Vostok*, IV, 218) states: "In view of the backwardness and apathy of the Persian peasantry it [the revolutionary movement in Gilan] did not find response among them. Having played its historical role, this movement, left to its own devices, lost its historical sense of mission and began to disintegrate internally." By employing the phrase "its own devices" Iransky undoubtedly alludes to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran in September, 1921, which removed the necessary military and ideological support from Kuchik Khan's rebellion.

i* Quoted in Ducrocq, *op. cit.*